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Retirees Meet

Spies — 007 Image Isn't Operative

By MILES CORWIN,
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Hans Moses was a CIA officer for 25 years. He never carried a gun; he never met a double agent on a secluded street corner; he rarely left his office in Germany. Moses worked 9 to 5 writing reports on the Soviet military and economy, based on information someone else compiled.

"If I were to look at myself from the outside, I guess I wouldn't find it terribly interesting," Moses said. "If it sounds dry, it's because it was."

Few of those who attended an Assn. of Former Intelligence Officers convention in San Diego over the weekend fit the flamboyant fiction image of the former spy. Most were soft-spoken men in three-piece suits or blazers; there were few stories of fast cars, slow deaths and double agents.

The "old boys" were reluctant to talk about "company" (CIA) business without government clearance. Some said their activities were so dull that their stories would give American espionage a bad name.

Founded in 1975

There were no forums on enemy agent abduction, or lectures on how to make fountain pen pistols. The retired CIA, FBI and military intelligence officers spent the weekend like any group of conventioners—they had business meetings, board of directors sessions, banquets and panel discussions on issues such as the need for closer cooperation with the academic community.

"This is not some kind of spies reunion," said John Greaney, executive director of the organization. "We're here to conduct business and have constructive discussions on issues that affect the intelligence community."

The association was founded in 1975 by a group of former intelligence officers who were disturbed by House and Senate subcommittees investigating intelligence operations. The organization, which hopes to counteract "bad publicity," offers its services to congressional committees, testifies on legislative proposals and provides speakers to civic and academic groups.

When conventioners gathered to drink and talk shop at the end of the day, Col. Carl Eifler drew an attentive circle.

Eifler, reverently referred to as

"The Deadliest Colonel," was commander of Detachment 101, the first unit of the Office of Strategic Services, which was the forerunner of both the CIA and the Green Berets.

When a soldier joined the elite Detachment 101 during World War II, Eifler handed the graduate a stiletto. The knife and the detachment's motto—"The difficult we do immediately; the impossible takes a little longer"—added to the mystique of one of the most efficient units in the history of American espionage.

An imposing presence—6 feet 2 inches tall, 240 pounds—Eifler sat on a balcony, sipped a Scotch and water and talked of World War II schemes to spirit scientists out of foreign countries, assassinate enemy leaders, rescue grounded flyers behind enemy lines, foment revolutions.

"I broke every law of God and man, but I never did anything for personal gain," Eifler said. "I was out to win a war for my country, and you can't fight a lawful war. . . . I think the CIA today has gotten a lot of bad publicity. Where do you want them to get information? From churches?"

But Eifler was an anomaly at the convention, one of the few men who fit the flamboyant image of a former spy, and one of the few who talked openly of his exploits.

Government Property

"Whatever I have in my head is government property," said Wallace Driver, a field intelligence officer with the CIA for 27 years. "I'm not allowed to make a substantive statement without government clearance."

Driver stood up and pointed to his American-Flag belt buckle. He said he joined the CIA because he is a "devoted patriot" who does not "have much truck with liberals."

Driver spent his last years with the CIA in Vietnam, where he posed as a free-lance photographer. He barely escaped Vietnam when Saigon fell, he said, and was aboard the last American airplane out of the country.

"I wasn't any bureaucrat; I was a spy," he said. "I had the fun and games; I was an actor and a con man. Hell, I liked standing on street corners in the rain scooping people up and taking them to safe houses."

"Now that I've surfaced, it can get kind of funny. I'll belly up to the bar and start talking with guys who sell insurance, or used cars, and they ask me what I do. I tell them I'm a retired spy. They never believe me."

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